

The RYERSON
POETRY
CHAP-BOOKS



Magic Hill
AND OTHER POEMS

By
MARY MATHESON

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AND
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This is a second Chap-Book by Mrs. Mary Matheson, of Kimberley, B.C., the first one, "Destiny and Other Poems," being out of print. Mrs. Matheson is an honours graduate of Queen's University, in English and History, Arts, '11.

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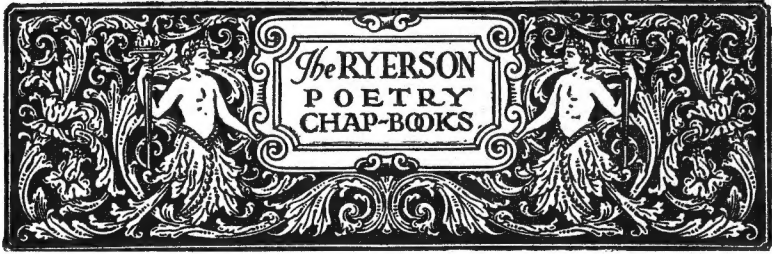
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Magic Hill

(Medicine Hat)

♦♦♦♦

THERE is a hill
 Across the down
That claims ten poplars
 For a crown
And at its feet,
 The grass among,
A river sings
 Its Springtime song.

Here violets
 That dance in May
Perform a merry
 Roundelay,
And crocuses
 Bow when they've met
Anemones.
 They pirouette
About the lilies,
 Tall and proud,
That grace the lovely,
 Motley crowd.

The bluebird calls
 In cheerful trills
Around tip-toeing
 Daffodils,
And every blade
 Of emerald grass
Bows low to see
 The Springtime pass.

One

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When twilight comes
With changing gleams
And weaves a net
Of mystic dreams,
Instead of shadows
That alarm,
The hill takes on
A magic charm.

In hyacinth
And opal-grey
Cool evening shadows
Hide away
All the bright loveliness
Of Day.

At night, as if
Some elfin wand
Touched all the valley
And beyond—
Like buttercups
In bowls of brown,
Spring up the lights
Of yonder town,
While far above
The dome of blue
Faint lights from Heaven
Twinkle through!

✦ ✦ ✦

SECRET STREAM

I KNOW of a stream
Where sunbeams gay
Chase each other
The live-long day;
And far above it,
On ladders high,
A fairy enamels
The blue, blue sky.

And when it gets dark
He comes back down,
With tired hands
And dusky gown,

And here he will play
Beside the stream
Till stars peep out
And day-things dream.

And then he will call,
In accents low,
To small field-mice
And creatures slow,
Or blind, or unlovely,
Or frightened things
Who fear the light
The day-time brings.

O sweet, secret stream,
Whose waters kind
Slake timid thirst
Of weak or blind.
God thought of all
His frail ones dear,
Then placed your crystal
Waters here;

And He thought of me
Who, weak, afraid
Of Life and Light,
Had often prayed
For a quiet spot
When Nightfall came,
Where I might humbly
Breathe His name.



THE BOW RIVER, ALBERTA

SLEEPING, sparkling,
Thou art come,
Mountain fastness
Once thy home.

Seething, speeding,
Treach'rous, drear,
While white mountains
Hover near,

Thos

Softly silent
O'er the plain.
Thus we see thee
Come again.

Swiftly silvery
Eddies turn,
Clasp the dead,
The living spurn.

Sorrow-smiting
Low has laid
Child? or aged?
Man? or maid?

Savage? Saint?
Of long ago
Thy trophies claimed,
River Bow?

Solemn, sentenced
Warrior brave?
White or red-man?
Coward? Knave?

Smiling as thou
Seem'st, I wot—
Majestic, yet I
Trust thee not!

✦ ✦ ✦

BLUE VIOLETS

WHERE, oh, where are you hiding,
Sweet flowers of the May?
Ah, I will go a-searching
This glad, bright day
Until your far, faint fragrance lightly enfolding me
Leads on where winds are whispering, and buds and wild birds be.

I feel the May-tug drawing,
My heart's athrob with Spring,
And violets lure me onward
Where happy rivers sing.
Adown the cliff in grassy nooks I spy first tints of blue—
O, the sky, the river, all are mine—the May-time—and You!

Four

THE PIPER

O WINTER is a gay young lad who pipes along the way;
Though skies be ruffled, cloud-bedecked, his song is blithe
and gay.

The stalwart banks that look so bleak and sombre-like and stern
Hie after him in snowy flakes the pipers song to learn.

They drift along the meadows low and to his time keep sway;
They hide among the silent trees—O, many games they play;
They wander off to river-sides or pile up in the sheds,
Then fall asleep in corners of deserted garden-beds.

But still he pipes of summer days a-tripping down the lane;
He pipes of Spring and violets that soon will come again;
He praises Autumn's crimson hood and amber-tinted gown
With purple sash and silver sheen, a-striding through the town.

O many are the tales he tells in cheery, lilting song,
And magic in his glance as he goes rollicking along.
We'll follow him till o'er the plains come armies blue and gold
Of crocuses and daffodils to slay our warrior bold.



THE NEW SONG

I SOWED a crippled seed
Upon a fertile plain—
Broken and bruised indeed,
How should it grow again?

I put a broken heart
Into a noble task,
To play a hidden part
Behind a smiling mask.

I ask not how seeds grow,
Nor how such hearts can bring
New life to Life. I only know
That on the plains rare flowers blow
And oftentimes the heart in woe
Its sweetest songs will sing.

THE STOLEN NEST

“O HUSH the sweet accordant note”—
My loved one asks I shall not sing;
Be still, the song that from my throat
Would in the wild woods sweetly ring.
My loved one's heart is sad and sore—
She bids that I shall sing no more.

Come, soothe the heart that cries in pain;
O Silence, bring your solace sweet.
Speech is but silver; there remain
The golden silences to meet
And comfort hearts which bleeding call
For silence on the world to fall.

Her nest with birdlings once was filled,
But now forlorn the laden bough;
O sweet the tiny notes they trilled—
So empty my love's world, that now
No music finds her heart again
But fills it with a bitter pain.

A song would ease my heart, I know,
Some plaintive, wistful, sad refrain,
That I, in singing soft and low,
Could feel the lessening of pain—
But since my love the silence needs,
Unheard my voice among the reeds.



STORM-SWEPT

THE WINTER days are waning
And storms are lifted high,
For winds have ceased complaining
Since Summer suns are nigh.
No more the snows are drifting
Like billows o'er the plain,
For Winter's veil is lifting
And Spring is here again.

But how March winds were blowing
Ere wintry days were done;
Strange gifts on us bestowing
He travelled boldly on,

And when, his mission ended,
He wandered o'er the hill,
How could I know it tended
New beauty to fulfil?

So where the storm went sweeping
Above my troubled soul
Hepaticas are peeping
And violets take toll,
And white stars in the grasses
And marigolds that sing
Make for each one who passes
An humble offering.



THE BRIDE

O, SUMMER climbed the cliffs to-day,
And Summer roams the plain;
Her dress and cloak are flowers gay,
Her jewels are the rain,
And shining dew-drops in her hair
Send forth a radiant gleam—
She flutters on without a care
Adown the vales of Dream.

When Spring her cloak has thrown aside
New tints adorn the green;
Dame Nature decks her as a bride—
No fairer beauty's seen.
The Sun who only whispered to
The gentle maid of Spring
Now greets his love with great ado,
His heart an offering.

To-day they wed 'neath orchard tall;
Larks sing a bridal song,
And petals like confetti fall
In showers all day long.
At e'en the world doth good will send
Borne far upon the wind,
And lo, a million stars extend
A million wishes kind.

THE TRYST

I'M GATHERING bluebells on a hill
A hundred miles away,
And all the city's noise is still
Upon a sunny day.

The roses nod, the lilies blow,
The June-time day is warm;
How far removed the Winter's snow,
Remote the April storm!

Blue are the skies beyond the plain
And, peeping from the sod,
The tenderest flow'rets smile again
And wonderingly nod.

Fair Life, fair Love, fair hour divine,
I hold you close, and dear.
An unseen hand outstretched to mine
Tells me that God is here!



THE OLD GREY MEN OF GARDENS

THE OLD grey men
Of gardens sere
Who dig and delve
This time o' year—
They love to watch
The silver rain
Come tinkling through
The boughs again.

O hapless day
When Winter reigned
And gardens
To grim Death were chained—
Then Memories
Fell as the snow
On gentle days
Of Long Ago,
For old, grey men
Of gardens sere
Who dig and delve
This time o' year.

The old grey men
Of gardens stow
Beauty in columns
Row on row—
No artist's eye
Could e'er invent
A more alluring
Sacrament
Of beauty
For our eager eyes
Than he
Who, grown old and wise,
Each year comes forth
With homely tools,
And, Monarch of
The Garden, rules.

And he has reason
To be proud—
Though rough his hands,
His shoulders bowed,
His life wrought Beauty
From the soil
By care
And homely, anxious toil.
What greater urge,
What higher creed,
Than give one's life
To Beauty's need,
Like old grey men
Of gardens sere
Who dig and delve
This time o' year?

✦ ✦ ✦

GYPSY TENT

I ALWAYS wanted
A garden wall
Of snowballs white
And lilacs tall
And mountain-ash
With branches spread,
Its great, green leaves
And berries red—

Roses a-plenty
With colour rife
And eyes that beckon
To whisp'ring life
Of low-toned birds
Who all day long
Fed hungry babes
With happy song;
And a moon that dances
In flying gown
All silvery-white
'Mid shadows brown.

But I never had
A garden wall
Of snowballs white
And lilacs tall,
Nor all the other
Things I willed
That ever fairy-
Fingers thrilled.

Instead, I owned
A gypsy-tent
And wide horizons
That never lent
The gentle peace
Of branching trees,
Of homing birds
And drowsing bees.

But how I love it !
The prairie wide—
My heart grows warm
And all inside
I feel a thrill
Of tender love
For all the world
Below—above—
These far horizons
Which ever keep
Their sacred vigil
While I sleep
And call to me
As no garden can
Of love to God
And fellowman.

NOR LESS DIVINE

I ALWAYS wanted
An orchard gay
With apple-blossoms
In months of May,
And robins singing
In whispering trees
That keep faint time
To the morning breeze,
And a sun that round
The world has gone
To greet me out of the gate
Of Dawn.

Rose was the sun
In days of old,
Wreathed in a splendor
Of blue and gold;
But the tint he brings
To me, to-day,
Is a loveliness
Of sombre-grey.

I see him now
In a waste of sky
Mount solemnly
To his throne on high—
No coquetry
As of old I see
When through orchard-trees
He peered at me.

Strange beauty this—
Austere and high
That to-day again
Goes speeding by.
Never two days
Is Beauty mine
In the self-same way—
Nor less divine
Does he grow, though rose
Be changed to grey
And he comes as he came not
Yesterday.

THE UNNAMED GREAT

WHAT'S greater than a kindly word
Or lovelier than a friendly smile?
Then why are these so oft deferred
Or thought so scarcely worth our while?
When, lo, the smile or word we say
May drive the touch of care away.

Success is measured not by gold,
Nor fame by winning far renown,
And oft the strong are they who hold
A proud, rebellious spirit down.
Unknown the conquerors in these
Magnificent soul-victories.

O names—great names we never see,
Now toiling in a humble sphere
Whose owners smile, and patiently
Give forth their meed of kindly cheer—
Lovely your life and great your name,
Though e'er denied the world's acclaim.



ASPEN BEACH, ALBERTA

OTREMBLING Aspen, waving
To and fro,
What are the fears that make thee
Tremble so?

Is it the lonely hours
When the throng
Of pleasure-seekers merry
All have gone?—

Vespers no longer mingling
With thy prayer
And voices on the water
Silent are?

Is it the long, deep silence
Over all
When Summer wanes, and Autumn
Days befall?

Is it the Winter coming
Merciless?
Do thy blanched leaves betoken
This distress?

O trembling Aspen, listen—
There is One
Controls th' eternal Beauty
That has gone

Far o'er the lake's horizon—
He who planned
Patterns a glory we cannot
Understand!



PRAIRIELAND

WHEN I was back in prairieland, I loved the whispering
wind—
(O, I have cast full many a sad and wistful glance behind
To see the prairie-roses blow, the radiant-setting sun
And feel Nightfall's arms about me—when the Day and Dusk
were done).

When I was back in prairieland I loved the trails that wind
Beyond the hills mysteriously till dim and undefined,
And then that broad and vast expanse that only was begun
Within the vision of the eye—where earth and sky were one.

When I was back in Prairieland fair Beauty was entwined
With all my thoughts and everywhere the days and nights com-
bined
To woo me with their comeliness—all other lands to shun
Until her heart and my heart one day should beat as one.

When I was back in prairieland I loved the sky so kind,
The sunset clouds that sailed along all gold-and-silver lined.
Methinks when Heaven comes to me and earthly days are done
'Twill not be Heaven complete without a prairie-setting sun.

Thirteen

BEWITCHED

WHEN summer suns the river-bed unseals,
Dismantling all the cliffs of white array—
And all their majesty again reveals
In lights and shadows of departing day;
When gothic trees unfold their green attire
Beneath the archway of a cloudless sky,
And cliffs above the banks are set on fire,
Touched by the evening sun in passing by,

Then shadows deep play down mysterious isles
And flit along the ridge with dark grimace
To cover up the gold. Mischievous wiles—
To rob of beauty my enchanted place;
Till, lo, an angel with bewitching grace
Touches the tapers of the sky—and smiles!



PRAIRIE NIGHT

O SWEET the dreams
Of him who lies
Beneath Alberta's
Transient skies,
When night comes down
Far o'er the plains
And naught is heard
Save waving grains
That softly
To each other say
Their lullabies
At close of day.

Across the wilds
The roses keep
Their fragrance drifting
Through his sleep,
And o'er the lakes'
Soft-silvered crest
A curlew croons
Her young to rest.

O radiant
 The hours of day
 That pass before
 His sight away,
 But Beauty yearns
 In hours of night
 O'er him, who weary
 Of the light,
 Longs for her Peace
 Without—within—
 And grants the Peace
 That ne'er hath been
 'Neath any far-off
 Alien skies;
 For, who on prairies
 Cradled lies
 Sees firmaments;
 'Tis here that he
 Hears Heaven's
 Farthest Minstrelsy.
 No refuge here
 From hidden deed,
 No sustenance
 For crippled creed;
 All must be open,
 Broad and free
 In him who sleeps
 On heart of Thee !



RETURNING

I SHALL be happy as the lark to-night,
 When I shall see the prairie's widening skies—
 'Tis this fair vision that has brought delight
 Where'er my lonely, vagrant pathway lies ;
 Your gentle touch shall bring my soul relief,
 Pain shall be gone before your smile again,
 Your hand outstretched allay the gnawing grief
 As sunshine breaks through dull, autumnal rain.
 Love's ancient, cleansing mystery you bring
 From your pure skies, your calmer depths below.
 O Gateway, backward let your hinges swing—
 We will keep tryst as in the Long Ago !

TO-MORROW

AND SO it is to-morrow I shall see
My own prairieland sunbathed, suncrowned,
Where joyous winds with laughter noisily
Shall run in madcap wavelets on the ground.

And I shall see the Dawn so far away,
Smile on this vast expanse of her domain,
And usher in a stormless, stainless day
Fresh from the hand of the good God again.

The meadowlark will sing at glorious Dawn,
The curlew call when Dusk is on the wane.
O Day, that came so oft my dreams among,
How swift your tread! I come not here again

For many days—so linger at my side
While sunset touches all with magic grace;
O Loveliness, within my heart abide,
And Beauty, that no Nightfall can efface!



AT NIGHT

BEFORE I close my eyes at night
And bid the day's long toil farewell
No noise of conflict can repel
Or drive away the sudden light
That floods my soul now bathed in rest
Of quiet thought, or silent quest.

I lay aside the clothes of care
And fold the garments of my toil.
My hands are cleansed from stain of soil,
I clasp them gently as in prayer.
I think of loved ones far away
Who come no more at close of day,

And of the loved ones who near by
Have made my day of life so bright.
I ask protection through the night
For all—and then come silently
Good angels of Kind Thoughts who keep
Their sacred vigil while I sleep.

PRAIRIE TOWN

THERE'S a dreamy, dreamy little town
Out West where I would be;
No boats fare forth, for all is broad
Expanse of wide prairie,
But o'er the lapse of years now gone
It's calling, calling me.

The streets bring no familiar face,
For years have sped away;
Instead of neat, frame buildings stand
High walls of brick at bay
To mock the simple, humble ways
Of folk of Yesterday.

But somehow, yet it calls to me
As mother to a child,
So soft, and low, and wistfully
Across the restless wild
Of memories that lies between
Me and the Yesteryears—
O little town, O little town,
So framed in smiles—and tears!



FORWARD

WHEN one achievement's ended there's another just ahead;
For every task we finish brings another in its stead,
And every time the prize we win
New doors fling wide to enter in
As we find another triumph to which our souls are led.

The glory of achievement is not in what we've done,
But in the satisfaction of another task begun,
For every day brings richer gains
If we but aim at higher planes.
Why cling to past achievement when there's greater to be won?

THE CURLEW

I LOVE the little friendly songs
That flowers sing to me;
I love the whisperings above
Of stars continually;
I love the little winds that sigh
And secrets tell as they pass by.

I love the grasses straight and tall
That keep time to the breeze;
I love the call of mating birds
Within the leafing trees,
And out upon the broad expanse
To see the swallows dart and glance.

But most of all the curlew's note
I love to hear at night
In silent places where he takes
His solitary flight—
Oh, miles and miles and miles away
From all the murmurings of the day,

He wings his way and never needs
A human hand for aid;
Across the dark and barren waste
He travels unafraid,
And in the dark and lonely hour
Flies—guided by an Unseen Power.

I too would fly should darkness fall,
Nor grovel on the earth;
In Pain's demand or Sorrow's call
My flight would have its birth,
And in the lone and darkened place
Would wing my way with poise and grace.

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